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SUBJECT: LIBERIA: NATIONAL ELECTIONS COMMISSION REVOKES LICENSES OF
10 POLITICAL PARTIES

¶1. (U) Summary: The National Elections Commission (NEC) has revoked the licenses of ten political parties for violating the constitution and election laws of Liberia. The revocation came after persistent warnings that the parties were not in compliance with the law. Twenty registered parties remain, but only ten of them are represented in the Legislature. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The National Elections Commission (NEC) revoked the licenses of ten political parties after it determined that they were in violation of Article 79 (c)(i) of the 1986 Constitution of Liberia which stipulates that in order for a party to function, it must maintain headquarters in Monrovia. NEC also said that the parties have failed to present their financial statements to it in accordance with Article 82(c) of the Constitution. The NEC filed a writ of dissolution of the affected parties at the Civil Law Court at the Temple of Justice in September 2008.

¶3. (U) The ten parties deregistered by the NEC are: Labor Party of Liberia, Reformed United Liberia Party, United Democratic Party, National Party of Liberia, United Democracy Alliance, Independent Democratic Party, People's Democratic Party of Liberia, Freedom Alliance Party of Liberia, Liberia Equal Rights Party and the All Liberia Coalition Party. These parties will not be allowed to take part in any future political process within the territorial confines of Liberia. Thirty political parties were registered during the 2005 elections. Twenty-two candidates vied for the Presidency after the formation of alliances and coalitions. Only ten parties are represented in the Legislature.

¶4. (U) Most of the deregistered parties are those whose leaders reside in the United States. They only returned to Liberia between 2004 and 2005 and since returned after their dismal performances during the 2005 elections. Most parties in Liberia are centered on single individuals and are not founded based on any particular ideology or philosophy. However, these ten parties do not have offices anywhere in the country, including Monrovia. The NEC invited the leadership of the affected parties on several occasions to remedy the situation but they all failed to adhere to persistent warnings from the NEC, hence the decision to revoke their licenses. The affected parties are locally referred to as "briefcase" parties.

¶4. (U) The NEC also warned existing political parties to abide by the rules governing political parties and vowed to take action against any party that violates the law. The NEC has also proposed draft legislation to the legislature which seeks to make the registration process more thorough in a bid to regulate the proliferation of political parties in Liberia.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: Most of Liberia's political parties are formed for the sole purpose of joining political alliances as a means of getting "lucrative" positions from the party that wins, as was the case during the 2005 Presidential elections. These parties usually wane away after elections are held and members who are lucky to be included in the elected government usually abandon their parties or join the ruling party. It is hoped that the draft electoral bill will limit or reduce the number of registered parties. Even the ten parties that found sufficient backing for legislative seats are probably too many. The Embassy plans to continue supporting

political party strengthening as part of our electoral assistance for the 2011 presidential and legislative elections, and having a manageable number of parties will help to that end.

THOMAS-GREENFIELD